

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL

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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete.

VETERANS DAY World War I officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of "the war to end all wars."

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of "Armistice Day." An Act of Congress approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year Armistice Day, a legal holiday. In 1954 the Act of 1938 was amended by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting in its place the word "Veterans." With the approval of this legislation November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

Veterans Day was changed to a Monday holiday beginning in 1971. It quickly became apparent that the commemoration of this day on November 11 was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so the annual observance of Veterans Day was returned to its original date beginning in 1978.

"Veterans Day," not "Veteran's Day" or "Veterans' Day" is the correct spelling. Veterans Day does not include an apostrophe but does include an "s" at the end of "Veterans" because it is not a day that "belongs" to veterans, it is a day for honoring all veterans.

Many people confuse Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor *all* those who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime. In fact, Veterans Day is largely intended to thank *living* veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who served - not only those who died - have sacrificed and done their duty.

VA CONTACTING VETERAN-STUDENTS ABOUT NEW GI BILL (VA News Release) WASHINGTON --

Representatives of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will be telephoning veterans across the country to explain their education benefits under the new Post-911 GI Bill and ensure beneficiaries are able to receive payments due them.

The Department is conducting this telephone outreach in response to the large numbers of veterans who have applied for education benefits for the fall 2009 semester. The calls are scheduled to go to veterans who have applied for benefits under the new educational assistance program. Those who registered for advanced payments will be called, too, to ensure they received their benefits.

To protect the personal identity of veterans, VA representatives making calls will not ask for any personal information, such as birthdates, bank account or social security numbers, but they may ask family members for information to contact Veterans who are away at school.

VA EXTENDS "AGENT ORANGE" BENEFITS TO MORE VETERANS (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – Relying on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki decided to establish a service-connection for Vietnam veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to Agent Orange. The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease.

Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a "presumed" illness don't have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

The Secretary's decision brings to 15 the number of presumed illnesses recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Other illnesses previously recognized under VA's "presumption" rule as being caused

by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy; Chloracne; Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia; Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2); Hodgkin's Disease; Multiple Myeloma; Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma; Porphyria Cutanea Tarda; Prostate Cancer; Respiratory Cancers; and Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma).

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA's services and programs for veterans exposed to the chemical are available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

NEW GRAVESITE LOCATOR ANNOUNCED (VA News Release) WASHINGTON— The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has made the gravesites of more than 6.7 million Veterans easier to locate using handheld devices with Internet capability, such as "smart phones." The latest improvement builds upon a service begun in 2004, when VA introduced an online nationwide gravesite locator, linked to its electronic burial records, that helps people find the cemetery in which their loved one is buried. The grave locations of veterans and eligible family members buried in national cemeteries, or whose graves are marked with a government headstone, can already be found with desktop computers and at national cemetery kiosks.

The original gravesite locator -- <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov> -- online since April 2004, continues to help veterans' families and others find the cemeteries where relatives, ancestors or friends are buried. The new Web site -- <http://m.va.gov/gravelocator> -- is enhanced for viewing and browsing on "smart phone" devices. Users enter a name to search and click "Locate" to find where the loved one is buried. Users can limit the search to a specific cemetery if that information is known.

The Web site will provide the name of the cemetery and a grave location, offer a link to a Google map and driving directions to the cemetery and, if the deceased is buried in a national cemetery or state veterans cemetery, provide a link to a cemetery map to help find the section where the grave is located.

In addition to the more than 6.7 million records now available, VA continues to add approximately 1,000 new records to the database each day. In 2005, VA added to its database of national cemetery burial records the locations of 1.9 million veterans whose graves were marked with a government headstone since 1997. These are mostly private cemeteries. Burial records with cemetery maps available are for burials in VA national cemeteries, state veterans cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery if the burials occurred since 1999.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at www.cem.va.gov or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at (800) 827-1000.

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications 1-877-823-2378

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

VA Health Revenue Service (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -
CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023
CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 352-793-7740
6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 561-649-6489
4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 904-766-5222
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846
9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840
104 Marine St, St Augustine FL 352-793-7740

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: www.va.gov

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) www.warms.vba.va.gov

St. Petersburg VA Regional Office: www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete

Property Management (sale of VA-reposessed homes): www.ocwen.com

Federal employment: www.usajobs.opm.gov

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: www.floridavets.org

"Florida Vets First:" www.FloridaVetsFirst.com

Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov